

Message Text

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70

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 NIC-01 DRC-01 /103 W
----- 059656

R 181610Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5549
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ATHENS 6843

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS GR

SUBJ: RETURN OF KATHIMERINI BRIGHTENS GREEK
JOURNALISTIC WORLD

1. THE PRESTIGIOUS ATHENS NEWSPAPER KATHIMERINI MADE ITS REAPPEARANCE SEPTEMBER 15 FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE APRIL 1967 MILITARY COUP. AT LEAST ONE SOURCE REPORTED THAT OF AN INITIAL FIRST DAY PRINTING OF 150,000 COPIES, APPROXIMATELY 120,000 WERE SOLD. THESE FIGURES REFLECT THE UNIQUE PLACE WHICH KATHIMERINI HAS TRADITIONALLY HELD WITH ITS GREEK READERSHIP. THE PAPER'S PUBLISHER, ELENI VLACHOU, HAS DURING THE PAST ALMOST EIGHT YEARS CONSTITUTED A SPECIAL SYMBOL OF THE ELITE'S RESISTANCE TO THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP, AND IN THAT SENSE THE RETURN OF VLACHOU AND HER JOURNAL TO GREEK LIFE COULD SUGGEST TO READERS THAT NORMALCY (AT LEAST IN THE GREEK SENSE) IS "JUST AROUND THE CORNER".

2. KATHIMERINI WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1919 AND DURING THE FIFTY-FIVE YEARS OF ITS EXISTENCE (INCLUDING EIGHT YEARS OF SELF IMPOSED SILENCE) IT CONSISTENTLY
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INJECTED A RATIONAL VOICE INTO THE HIGHLY-CHARGED

JOURNALISTIC ARENA. ITS IDEOLOGY WAS CLASSICALLY CONSERVATIVE AND ROYALIST. IN TERMS OF STYLE, COVERAGE, SUBSTANCE--AND SHEER PROFESSIONALISM--IT COULD BE CATEGORIZED AS THE NEW YORK TIMES OF ATHENS. THE PAPER'S FOUNDER WAS GEORGE VLACHOS--THE FATHER OF ELENI. GENERALLY ESTEEMED AS A PUBLISHER AND NEWSMAN OF QUALITY AND INTEGRITY, HIS RENOWNED "LETTER TO HITLER" IS STILL WIDELY EMPLOYED IN JOURNALISM SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AS A MODEL OF NEWS WRITING AT ITS BEST.

3. THE ASSUMPTION IS THAT ELENI VLACHOU WILL MAINTAIN A CONSERVATIVE ORIENTATION IN HER PAPER'S POLICY--WITH APPROPRIATE ALLOWANCES BEING MADE FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY CONDITIONS OF CURRENT-DAY GREECE. AT THE SAME TIME, SHE WILL PROBABLY GUARD ZEALOUSLY HER JOURNALISTIC INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE, PERHAPS PREFERRING TO BE THE "CRITIC OF ALL" RATHER THAN "A FRIEND OF SOME". THIS PERSPECTIVE SEEMS TO EMERGE IN HER FIRST SIGNED EDITORIAL WHICH APPEARED IN THE PAPER'S MAIDEN SEPTEMBER 15 ISSUE ENTITLED "AS LONG AS YOU DON'T..." IN WHICH VALCHOU ENGAGES IN A DIALOGUE WITH WELL-MEANING VISITORS WHO URGE HER TO EXERCISE EXTREME CAUTION AS TO POLITICAL THEMES CHOSEN FOR DISCUSSION IN HER PAPER. VLACHOU'S RESPONSE QUOTES SOLZHENITZIN: "HUMANITY'S SALVATION DEPENDS ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF ALL MEN IN ALL MATTERS". THEN, IN HER OWN WORDS, SHE RETORTS THAT "AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF SILENCE, IT IS NOW MY PURPOSE AND INTENTION TO SPEAK ABOUT EVERYTHING". (FULL TEXT OF EDITORIAL FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM). SHE PROMPTLY PROVES IT BY CALLING IN THE SAME BREATH FOR THE RETURN OF THE KING AND THE LEGALIZATION OF THE GREEK COMMUNIST PARTY.

4. BUT ALL IS NOT "ROSES" FOR ELENI. HER PRINTING PRESSES--THOUGH RELATIVELY NEW IN 1967--ARE NOW OBSOLESCE. ONE JOURNALISTIC SOURCE TOLD EMBOFFS THAT A PARTICULAR OPERATION WHICH MOST HIGH SPEED PRESSES CAN HANDLE IN SIX OR SEVEN MINUTES TAKES KATHIMERINI'S EQUIPMENT ALMOST TWENTY MINUTES. THEN TOO, SHE IS SHORT OF FUNDS. FINALLY MANY OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STAFF WHO WORKED WITH HER IN PRE-COUP DAYS HAVE SINCE JOINED OTHER NEWSPAPERS, HAVE DIED, OR ARE ENGAGED IN OTHER LINES OF WORK. BUT THOSE WHO KNOW ELENI--AND MANY MORE WHO ONLY KNOW HER REPUTATION--ARE SURE THAT ONE WAY OR THE OTHER SHE WILL OVERCOME THESE OBSTACLES AND WILL CONTINUE TO PUBLISH A HIGH QUALITY, GILT-EDGED JOURNALISTIC PRODUCT. STEARNS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLICATIONS, NEWSPAPERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ATHENS06843
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740262-0207
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740937/aaaabewi.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 MAY 2002 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <07 MAR 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RETURN OF KATHIMERINI BRIGHTENS GREEK JOURNALISTIC WORLD
TAGS: PINS, GR, KATHIMERINI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005